WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   1.   A method of generating test code for an automated test procedure

2   applyable to a system comprising a plurality of interconnected elements, the method

3   comprising the steps of:

4   defining a source file having a plurality of tags, each tag associated with a

5   member of a library of executable code objects defining a set of instructions for

6   performing a portion of the automatic test procedure;

7   generating a test plan in a conversational language from the source file; and

8   generating the test code for the automated test procedure from the source file.

1   2.   The method of claim 1, wherein the step of generating a test plan

2   comprises the steps of :

3   translating the tags; and

4   generating a conversational language phrase for each translated tag.

1   3.   The method of claim 2, wherein the test plan comprises a test index

2   identifying the system elements tested by the test code, the test index generated by

3   performing the step of scanning the interpreted tags to identify the system elements

4   tested by the test code.

1   4.   The method of claim 2, wherein the step of generating a test plan

2   further comprises the steps of:

3   identifying an uninterpretable tag in the test plan; and

4   appending the test plan with an error message identifying the uninterpretable

5   tag.

1   5. The method of claim 1, wherein the library of executable code objects

2 comprises a first executable code object defining a set of instructions for performing

3 method steps comprising the steps of:

4   issuing a command to a commanded system element; and

5   intercepting a message responsive to the command from the commanded

6 element.

1   6. The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of:

2   evaluating the message responsive to the command; and

3   providing an error message according to the evaluated message.

1   7. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of generating test code for

2 the automated test procedure comprises the step of translating the executable code

3 objects associated with the tag in the source file.

1   8. An apparatus for generating test code for an automated test procedure

2 applyable to a system comprising a plurality of interconnected elements, comprising:

3   means for defining a source file having a plurality of tags, each tag associated

4 with a member of a library of executable code objects defining a set of instructions

5 for performing a portion of the automatic test procedure;

6   means for generating a test plan in a conversational language from the source

7 file; and

8   means for generating the test code for the automated test procedure from the

9 source file.

1 9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the means for generating a test plan

2 comprises:

3   means for translating the tags; and

4   means for generating a conversational language phrase for each translated tag.

1 10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the test plan comprises a test index

2 identifying the system elements tested by the test code, wherein the test index

3 generated by performing the step of scanning the interpreted tags to identify the

4 system elements tested by the test code.

1 11. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the means for generating a test plan

2 further comprises:

3   means for identifying an uninterpretable tag in the test plan; and

4   means for appending the test plan with an error message identifying the

5 uninterpretable tag.

1 12. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the library of executable code

2 objects comprises a first executable code object comprising:

3   means for issuing a command to a commanded system element; and

4   means for intercepting a message responsive to the command from the

5 commanded element.

1 13. The apparatus of claim 12, further comprising:

2   means for evaluating the message responsive to the command; and

3   means for providing an error message according to the evaluated message.

1 14. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the means for generating test code

2 for the automated test procedure comprises means for translating the executable code

3 objects associated with the tag in the source file.

1   15.   A program storage device, readable by a computer, tangibly embodying

2   at least one program of instructions executable by the computer to perform method steps

3   of generating test code for an automated test procedure applyable to a system

4   comprising a plurality of interconnected elements, the method comprising the steps of:

5   defining a source file having a plurality of tags, each tag associated with a

6   member of a library of executable code objects defining a set of instructions for

7   performing a portion of the automatic test procedure;

8   generating a test plan in a conversational language from the source file; and

9   generating the test code for the automated test procedure from the source file.

1   16.   The program storage device of claim 15, wherein the method step of

2   generating a test plan comprises the method steps of :

3   translating the tags; and

4   generating a conversational language phrase for each translated tag.

1   17.   The program storage device of claim 16, wherein the test plan

2   comprises a test index identifying the system elements tested by the test code, the test

3   index generated by performing the step of scanning the interpreted tags to identify the

4   system elements tested by the test code.

1   18.   The program storage device of claim 16, wherein the step of

2   generating a test plan further comprises the method steps of:

3   identifying an uninterpretable tag in the test plan; and

4   appending the test plan with an error message identifying the uninterpretable

5   tag.

1   19.   The program storage device of claim 15, wherein the library of

2   executable code objects comprises a first executable code object defining a set of

3   instructions for performing method steps comprising the steps of:

4   issuing a command to a commanded system element; and

5   intercepting a message responsive to the command from the commanded

6   element.

1   20.   The program storage device of claim 19, wherein the method steps

2   further comprise the steps of:

3   evaluating the message responsive to the command; and

4   providing an error message according to the evaluated message.

1   21.   The program storage device of claim 15, wherein the method step of

2   generating test code for the automated test procedure comprises the method step of

3   translating the executable code objects associated with the tag in the source file.